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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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02-63658 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/57/L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.14: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Ms. Serazzi** (Chile), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Congo, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Myanmar, Namibia, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United Republic of Tanzania also wished to become sponsors.

2. Two revisions should be made to the text before the Committee. The third preambular paragraph should be replaced with the following:

> "*Recalling also and reaffirming* the commitments made at major United Nations conferences, special sessions, summit conferences and their follow-up processes, including in this context the recognition of the contributions of the outcomes of recent United Nations conferences and summits, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 18 to 22 March 2002; the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, held in New York from 8 to 10 May; and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, and the principles expressed in relevant United Nations declarations".

In paragraph 10, the text following the words "taking into account" should be replaced by the words "among others the need for an integrated and coordinated follow-up to all major United Nations conferences, special sessions and summits".

3. **The Chairman** noted that Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Belarus, Belize, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Croatia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Malawi, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, the Sudan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda and Zambia also wished to sponsor the draft resolution, as orally revised.

Agenda item 98: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/C.3/57/L.12 and L.13)

Draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.12: Promoting youth employment

4. **Mr. De Barros** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the words "The General Assembly" should be inserted at the beginning of the draft resolution, and "the Secretariat" should be inserted after the words "World Bank" in paragraph 3.

5. **Mr. Fall** (Senegal) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Portugal, Seychelles, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania.

6. **The Chairman** said that Barbados, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Haiti, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, St. Lucia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Trinidad and Tobago also wished to become sponsors.

7. **Mr. Roshdy** (Egypt) said that the correction read out by the Secretary of the Committee should be re-submitted to the drafting group; otherwise, the text would read "the Secretariat and other relevant specialized agencies".

Draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.13: United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

8. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that Cyprus,

Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan and Myanmar had also become sponsors. Nearly 1 billion people in the world were illiterate, the majority of them women and girls. In some countries, almost 70 per cent of the adult population could not enjoy the right to education. It was therefore urgent and important to conduct a worldwide campaign against illiteracy.

9. The sponsors had agreed to a number of revisions. The following new fifth and sixth preambular paragraphs should be added:

> "*Affirming* that the realization of the right to education, especially for girls, contributes to the eradication of poverty,"
>
> "*Deeply concerned* about the persistence of the gender gap in education, which is reflected by the fact that nearly two thirds of the world's adult illiterates are women".

In addition, paragraph 5 should be revised to read:

> "*Appeals* to all Governments and professional organizations to strengthen national and professional educational institutions in their countries with a view to expanding capacity and promoting quality of education;"

while a revised paragraph 10 would read:

> "*Decides* to include in the agenda of its fifty-ninth session, under the item entitled "Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family", a sub-item entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all."

10. **The Chairman** announced that Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Croatia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sri Lanka, Saint Lucia, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine wished to join the sponsors.

Agenda item 99: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/C.3/57/L.15)

Draft resolution A/C.3/57/L.15: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

11. **Ms. Kislinger** (Venezuela) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 43: Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/57/350)

Agenda item 105: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/57/41 and Corr.1, 295, 402)

12. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) said that the outcome of the special session on children would be fully incorporated into the national plan of action for children for the period up to 2010, which was currently being finalized. An all-Russian conference to be convened in late 2002 would also be devoted to follow-up to the special session. Internal procedures were under way for ratification in the near future of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

13. In 2002, his Government had undertaken urgent, concerted action to combat homelessness among children and had established a coordinating mechanism to that end under the Ministry of the Interior. During its first six months in operation, more than 400,000 children had been removed from the streets, most of them returned to their families.

14. A bill to amend the Criminal Code by increasing penalties for sexual offences against children had been approved in first reading. Its enactment would accelerate ratification by the Russian Federation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

15. His Government welcomed constructive dialogue with the United Nations system on the most acute issues affecting the realization of children's rights in the Russian Federation and had welcomed the visits made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

16. The international community must give priority to children's issues. It was particularly important to address long-term issues in the context of a changing world and to devise an appropriate strategy for child protection. The role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be strengthened to that end, with a view also to achieving its universal ratification. Real concern for children was not a question of meting out charity, but of creating the bases for a strong economy, a just society and peace. Recent events had demonstrated the importance of joint action to ensure the safety of the world's children in the face of the terrorist threat.

17. **Ms. Russell** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that the outcome document of the special session on children had reaffirmed the commitment of Governments to completing the unfinished agenda of the 1990 World Summit for Children and contained a Declaration setting out the measures that each country should take to build a new world for children. The overall findings of the session had reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goals.

18. The HIV/AIDS problem was considered one of the principal obstacles to development, above all for children in the most affected parts of the world. The CARICOM countries were particularly concerned about the problem, as the Caribbean was one of the regions where the HIV rate was growing fastest. In fact, the Caribbean region was ranked second only to sub-Saharan Africa in prevalence of the disease. The high incidence of single-parent families in the Caribbean meant that growing numbers of children were being orphaned when their only parent died of AIDS. According to a recent UNICEF fact sheet, the numbers of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS were expected to increase dramatically over the next eight years.

19. Prevention was the key to minimizing new HIV infections and the Caribbean Governments had been working closely with the United Nations and other agencies to stop the spread of the disease, focusing on four priority interventions in 12 programme countries in the eastern Caribbean and Suriname to plan and implement the CARICOM Health and Family Life Education Project. Other areas supported included the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, counselling, youth employment, care and assistance to the affected and their families and the formulation of projects to develop and implement national policies on orphans. There were also special programmes for youth, including the Youth Empowerment Programme which provided the necessary training and skills for young people to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases. Health workers were also being trained to counsel and help HIV-infected mothers. The Caribbean countries, with the aid of the United Nations, particularly UNICEF, had been working assiduously to defeat HIV/AIDS, thereby contributing to the goal of "A World Fit for Children".

20. The early onset of sexual activity in the Caribbean region, where almost 60 per cent of young people were sexually active before the age of 14, made young people highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The CARICOM States were grateful to UNICEF and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) for their involvement in the CARICOM Regional Strategic Plan of Action for HIV/AIDS and other such programmes in each country of the region.

21. Even though the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the human rights instrument with the greatest number of signatories and ratifications, the world in 2002 was a much more dangerous place for children than it had been when the Convention was adopted. More children — one in three children in developing countries — were living in abject poverty and there was far more instability and violence.

22. For over a decade, the United Nations had been organizing activities to force the international community to tackle global inequities and formulate plans and initiatives to eradicate them. The problems and inequalities engendered by globalization demanded both global and national responses and it was to be hoped that the recent international Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development would initiate a renewed effort to reduce economic and social inequalities, particularly since women and children were the first to suffer in times of crisis.

23. The involvement of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography all impeded the achievement of a world fit for children. The CARICOM countries therefore welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on those issues.

24. Even though the Caribbean countries had been deeply involved in combating HIV/AIDS, they had not abandoned other areas where children required attention, such as early childhood education and programmes for adolescents. The Caribbean region had adopted the Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents at the tenth Ibero-American Summit held in 2000, and the Kingston Consensus and the statements made by Caribbean leaders at the special session on children were further evidence of the region's commitment to children. The obstacles to realizing the rights of the child remained daunting, however. All nations should try to meet the commitments made at the 1990 World Summit for Children and at the special session on children held in 2002.

25. **Mr. Youssef** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that while the Committee was discussing children, Palestinian children were being killed by the Israeli army. War crimes and crimes against humanity were being committed daily on Palestinian land and no one had been able to stop the aggressor. African children should not be forgotten either, given the malnutrition and AIDS pandemic that they were facing.

26. The wretched situation confronting children was persisting 11 years after the holding of the World Summit for Children, which had aimed to secure a better future for them. Children in war zones still needed protection, as was the case in many African countries, and children still needed to be freed from the clutches of poverty, diseases and ignorance.

27. The recent special session on children had been an important step towards the common goal of securing a better future for children. Achieving that goal involved understanding the causes of poverty and providing sufficient resources to developing countries so that they would overcome poverty, malnutrition and epidemics. The special session had emphasized the need to educate every child and to make elementary education compulsory and free. His Government had affirmed the right of every child to an education. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was reviewing the Protocols thereto with a view to their adoption. It had adopted Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Libyan laws protected all the rights of children and considered any harm done to children criminal and punishable by jail. Education was compulsory and free for all Libyan children and penalties were imposed on parents who prevented their children from attending school. Medical care was also universal and free.

28. Libyan children had suffered from the economic sanctions unjustly imposed on the country for seven years. They had been the first victims of the embargo and many had died or been disabled by mines planted by the imperialist countries. His delegation urged the international community to prevent the repetition of such crimes and to recognize the right of peoples to receive appropriate compensations for the injustices committed against them.

29. In conclusion, he hoped that the coming decade would see the fulfilment of many of the pledges made in favour of the world's children, and that the grand promises of the present would not translate into modest accomplishments of the future.

30. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). At the special session on children, the international community had made a collective commitment to completing the unfinished agenda of the 1990 World Summit for Children. His Government was continuing to build on the advances that it had made in various areas of child development. Immunization coverage had been maintained at over 75 per cent and several childhood diseases had been eradicated. The Government remained committed to implementing policies aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality and the impact of HIV/AIDS, a disease that had a devastating impact on the lives of children. Addressing the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS and other transmissible diseases required a collective effort, networking among all stakeholders and a full commitment at the highest policy- and decision-making levels, coupled with resources commensurate with the scale of the pandemic. Accordingly, his Government urged its partners to donate generously to the United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

31. Education was a basic human right and a key to reducing poverty and promoting democracy, tolerance and human and institutional capacities for development. His Government had steadily increased the share of the national budget allocated to education, giving priority to primary education. Unfortunately, the

high rates of enrolment at that level had not been matched by the necessary improvements in teacher training and in secondary school facilities.

32. Malawi had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. His delegation commended the Committee on the Rights of the Child for working with the Government to monitor implementation of the provisions of the Convention and welcomed the fact that that Committee would play a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the outcome of the special session on children.

33. His Government had instituted concrete measures to ensure the effective protection of Malawi's children. In 1999, a Child Rights Unit had been established within the Human Rights Commission to protect children from abuse, violence and exploitation. The Malawi Law Commission was also reviewing existing legislation to ensure its conformity with international human rights norms. However, areas such as the administration of juvenile justice and human rights education required financial and technical assistance. Malawi was a signatory to all the International Labour Organization conventions relating to the abolition of child labour and its national legislation regulated the minimum age of employment. The best interest of the child would be the guiding principle for all its initiatives concerning children. Lastly, his delegation was pleased to observe that UNICEF and its partners were working actively towards ensuring that the countries of sub-Saharan Africa gave priority to investment in children as part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

34. **Ms. Korneliouk** (Belarus) said that the special session on children had provided an opportunity for the international community to exchange best practices while acknowledging that a world fit for children had yet to be created. Her Government had identified the following issues as being of particular concern: the situation of orphaned children, violence against children, juvenile offenders, child neglect, the spread of HIV/AIDS and juvenile drug abuse. In addition, some 16 years after the Chernobyl accident, more than 400,000 affected children continued to require special protection and attention.

35. Preparations for the special session had been accorded special priority at the national level, with input received from local and national authorities as well as non-governmental organizations. National reports on the situation of children were now being published yearly, and children's forums and meetings between leaders of local authorities and child representatives had become traditional.

36. As part of the Government's national follow-up to the special session on children, a law on the rights of the child had been enacted, a national plan of action had been approved and a Commission on Children's Rights had been established to coordinate State policy on children. A presidential programme entitled "Children of Belarus" was in the process of being implemented. Since 2000, the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been distributed as an addendum to birth certificates and to all passports issued to 16 year-old children. New textbooks had also been published to raise awareness of children's rights. Belarus had acceded to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and procedures were under way for it to become a party to the Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict.

37. Lastly, her delegation welcomed the UNICEF country programme for Belarus for 2003-2005, which would expand cooperation in promoting children's rights in many areas, including the prevention of iodine-deficiency disorders, the fight against HIV/AIDS, foster care, the establishment of children's shelters and juvenile justice.

38. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay) said that the success of the special session on children had underscored the high priority that Member States attached to the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents. His Government would make every effort to implement the measures identified in the outcome document. Paraguay had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and the Convention continued to be a source of inspiration for legislators and politicians. His Government had also ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, which made a vital contribution to the protection of children and adolescents. His delegation was strongly committed to the full implementation of the Convention and other instruments relating to children.

39. In 2001, a new Children and Adolescents' Code had entered into force in Paraguay and a Secretariat for Children and Adolescents had been established to centralize government action in that area. While the previous Code had taken a problem-based approach,

the new Code introduced the concept of the all-round protection of children and adolescents. It also provided for the creation of a national system for children and adolescents which, in conjunction with the executive branch and the Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, would allow national policies for children to be drawn up and implemented. The new Code introduced changes in the juvenile justice system, the role of community organizations working for children and adolescents and juvenile employment regulations. It also regulated State intervention with regard to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, children and adolescents working on the street and child abuse. In the past year, the Government had implemented activities in those areas with UNICEF and other international organizations.

40. In recent years, Paraguay had adopted a national action plan for children and an adoption law and was introducing an educational reform which made significant changes in pre-school education coverage. Net enrolment in the first and second cycles of basic education was 90 per cent.

41. Despite the progress made, poverty continued to be the main obstacle to achieving the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children, particularly in the areas of health and education. In Paraguay, 41 per cent of the population were under 15 years of age. While 32 per cent of the total population lived in poverty, the rate for those under 15 was 42 per cent. The Government had therefore implemented global policy initiatives for children, including a substantial increase in social spending. Government spending on basic education and maternal, child and adolescent health had increased by 72 per cent over the past nine years. As a least developed country, Paraguay was still endeavouring to achieve minimum goals before moving on to the more ambitious and complex aspects of child survival and development.

42. The necessary legal framework to guide Member States had been put in place over the past decade, but it would take not just the political will of Governments but also a concerted, coordinated effort by the international community, international organizations and civil society to achieve the goals set at the 1990 Summit. All States must fulfil their commitments to children and adolescents as the best legacy and investment for their future.

43. **Mr. Ingólfsson** (Iceland) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child must continue to be the focus of the Committee's work. It was important to strengthen the Committee on the Rights of the Child by increasing its membership, in that connection, he urged Member States which had not yet done so to give their consent to the amendment to article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention. He also called on States to accede to or ratify the two Optional Protocols to the Convention.

44. Several aspects of the rights of children deserved special attention, such as the empowerment of the girl child through education and reproductive health care and the protection of children affected by armed conflict. His delegation was particularly concerned about the plight of children in the occupied Palestinian territories. It urged States not to impose the death penalty on offenders under the age of 18 and to abolish such a penalty by law, in accordance with the provisions of article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

45. At the domestic level, his Government was in the process of drawing up a public policy on children's issues and a plan of action. The Icelandic Parliament had recently passed a new Child Protection Act designed to enhance the efficiency of child protection, and in 1999 the Ombudsman for Children had established a Youth Parliament to canvass young peoples' opinions with a view to promoting better living conditions for children and safeguarding their rights, interests and needs.

46. The outcome document of the special session on children provided for measures to address tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as for policies and programmes aimed at reducing violence and suicide among children. The emphasis in Iceland was on preventive measures, but a number of treatment and rehabilitation facilities for young people with alcohol and drug problems did exist. The Directorate of Health had just issued a study on suicide among Icelandic adolescents, which identified several significant risk factors. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the international community would continue to make progress in implementing its commitments concerning the rights of children.

47. **Mr. Sumirat** (Indonesia) said that his Government emphatically condemned the terrorist bomb blast that had claimed almost 200 lives in Bali on

12 October. He expressed his deepest sympathy to all those who had lost family members and friends.

48. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the special session on children. Since the 1990 World Summit for Children, significant progress had been made in reducing infant and child mortality, malnutrition and illiteracy, but unless efforts were stepped up in the coming decade, the Millennium Development Goals would not be met. International and regional cooperation would contribute to the successful implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the special session; with that in mind, his Government had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and signed the two Optional Protocols thereto.

49. At the domestic level, Indonesian non-governmental organizations had, with the support of the Government and UNICEF, established an independent National Commission on Child Protection. The Indonesian Parliament had recently passed a child protection law and was in the process of developing various national action plans intended to safeguard children's human rights.

50. Primary responsibility for implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the special session lay with each individual country. His Government was therefore moving to enact and implement appropriate policies and legislation. However, it was vital to realize that, given their limited means, poorer countries would not be able to go it alone and would need the support of the international community if they were to implement their national plans successfully. He called on the international community to take the steps necessary to create the enabling environment that was required to provide assistance to the world's children.

51. **Mr. Mun** Jong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the future of humankind depended on creating a better world for children. Since liberation, his Government had attached great importance to the well-being of children and had passed several laws to improve their situation.

52. Although economic decline due, inter alia, to a series of natural disasters had hindered the implementation of social policies aimed at children, his Government was continuing to strive to provide children with a better quality of life. In that connection, his delegation was grateful to the United Nations agencies and programmes that had provided humanitarian support to his country, thereby considerably improving material conditions for children.

53. The outcome document of the special session on children contained a series of objectives in the areas of child survival, protection and development. In order to achieve those objectives, special attention should be given to a number of issues. Relevant national policies and systems which responded to the specific realities of each country should be implemented, legal mechanisms for child protection should be strengthened and an environment conducive to education should be created. A favourable international environment was also essential. His delegation believed that appropriate measures should be taken to solve problems caused by the negative impact of globalization, unilateral economic sanctions against developing countries and various regional conflicts, all of which continued to threaten child survival and development. Lastly, to address violations of the rights of children successfully, financial contributions should be increased and international cooperation enhanced.

54. In conclusion, he urged all States to honour the political commitments made at the special session on children and called on the United Nations system to make further efforts to secure financial contributions from developed countries and to strengthen cooperation and coordination at the regional and international levels.

55. **Mr. Francis** (Jamaica) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Barbados on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The special session on children had been a milestone for the global community, since world leaders had made a new commitment to redouble their efforts to create a world fit for children. It was imperative that the compelling significance of that commitment did not fade with the passage of time.

56. Although many countries had made significant progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the 1990 World Summit for Children, much remained to be done fully to secure the rights and well-being of the world's children. HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, physical abuse, inadequate hygiene and poor social services were some of the primary factors which continued to threaten the survival of children throughout the world, and he called on national governments, in partnership

with international organizations, civil society and national and international stakeholders, to improve their efforts to address those threats and to place the interest of every child at the forefront of policy-making.

57. At the domestic level, a committee comprising representatives of the Government and non-governmental organizations had been established in Jamaica to draw up a National Plan of Action on Children. Its primary objectives would include assessing existing national plans that addressed children-related issues, identifying gaps in policy and integrating a multisectoral perspective into the proposed National Plan. In that connection, his delegation expressed appreciation to UNICEF for its provision of technical support.

58. With regard to legal provisions, his Government was in the process of reforming its Child Care and Protection Bill by drafting new legislation to improve the protection of children in State care, and was also considering acceding to The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

59. Turning to the issue of children in armed conflict, his Government had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in May 2002, believing that it would prove a vital tool in addressing impunity and bringing to justice those responsible for violations of the rights of children in situations of conflict. He welcomed the efforts made by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to incorporate child protection into peacekeeping and peace-building operations and reiterated his delegation's full support for the initiative aimed at integrating the agenda for children and armed conflict into the work of the United Nations system. His delegation believed that addressing poverty and the other root causes of conflict was the most effective means of protecting children from the devastating effects of war and, in that connection, it welcomed the integrated approach to conflict prevention being taken within the United Nations system.

60. If the international community was to be faithful to its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, efforts to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography and trafficking, should be intensified. In particular, the sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls in the context of transnational organized crime was increasing. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was therefore a welcome development.

61. Lastly, the protection of children began with their empowerment, but it would be difficult to secure their rights to education, basic health care and nutrition if poverty and underdevelopment impaired the capacity of national governments to invest in children. It was therefore important to view the achievement of the objective of child development within the context of the Millennium Development Goals and to promote a development agenda which sought to secure the interests of every child.

62. **Mr. Kirn** (Slovenia) said that the rights of children was one of the priorities of Slovenia's foreign policy on human rights and social development. His Government was endeavouring to contribute to efforts within the United Nations and other international organizations aimed at creating better living conditions for children worldwide and, in that connection, was striving to implement at both the national and regional levels the commitments made at the special session on children.

63. Children affected by armed conflict needed rehabilitation and hope if sustainable peace was to be achieved. With that in mind, Slovenia had set up the Regional Centre for the Psychosocial Well-being of Children, known as "Together", to provide assistance to children affected by armed conflict and post-war poverty in south-eastern Europe. His delegation wished to thank those countries that had already made donations to the Centre and invited any other countries who wished to do so to cooperate with it.

64. At the domestic level, a Council for Children in Slovenia had been established, comprising representatives of the Government and non-governmental organizations. The Council's main objective was to monitor the implementation of measures aimed at promoting the rights of children and to seek new ways of improving their lives. It was also engaged in awareness-raising activities.

65. The Slovenian Human Rights Ombudsman, a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, also sat on the Council for Children. In the spring of 2002, a special working group on the rights

of the child, intended to promote the practical implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had been set up within the Ombudsman's Office. It was important to engage in direct dialogue with children themselves; to that end, a Children's Parliament had been established which met annually at the local, regional and national levels and provided a forum in which children could discuss their status, rights and role in society with members of the Slovenian Government.

66. In conclusion, he reiterated his delegation's recognition of and support for the work of all United Nations institutions in protecting and promoting the rights of the child. He urged Member States to assume their common responsibility to ensure a happier future for the world's children.

67. **Ms. Held** (Suriname) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Barbados on behalf of the Member States of CARICOM. The full protection of children and young people and the promotion of policies targeted to their needs were of immense importance to her Government, which had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993 and had participated at the highest level in the World Summit for Children and the special session on children.

68. Her Government had implemented various national measures to protect the rights of children, including the drafting of a National Plan of Action, a National Youth Policy and legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of age and gender. A new inheritance law had removed the differences between legitimate and natural children.

69. Poverty was a major problem in her country and one which affected children particularly. The Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers gave priority to education, since investing in children was essential for development. A National Education Plan had recently been drafted which laid the foundations for modernizing and streamlining the education system. Special attention was being paid to education in the country's interior, where basic infrastructures were lacking and where approximately 25 per cent of the country's children were living as part of the indigenous and Maroon populations.

70. Adults had an obligation to create an environment in which children could enjoy all their human rights. In that connection, the United Nations Association of Suriname and its youth division were working with the Government on a human rights education project. She urged Member States to continue working to implement the commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Her Government, in close cooperation with civil society and the private sector, would do its utmost to participate fully in that implementation process.

71. **Mr. Vienravi** (Thailand) said that his Government fully supported the outcome of the special session on children and was in the process of translating the commitments made at that session into national policies and programmes. The National Youth Bureau was preparing a national agenda on children and, in order to ensure that the global movement for children became local, all sectors of society would be mobilized in the implementation of a national action plan.

72. His Government's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child were the framework for its efforts to meet the basic needs of children. By law, the death penalty could not be imposed on a minor. Child health and education were part of the overall national development plan, and the National Plan to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS included the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and care for AIDS orphans. Because of their vulnerability, children and young people were the focus of the national campaign on the prevention of drug abuse. The Government was also striving to provide access to basic education for all children, as guaranteed in the Constitution.

73. Children must be protected from exploitation and violence. In that connection, his Government supported the principles of the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict and was moving towards their ratification. It also placed priority on the problem of trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children, and had included anti-trafficking provisions in its Anti-Money Laundering Act. Recognizing the importance of bilateral, regional and international partnerships in tackling that problem, the Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with Cambodia against trafficking in women and children. The discussion of trafficking in persons at the forthcoming session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

was also welcome. The international community had pledged to create a world fit for children, and it must not fail in that promise.

74. **Mr. Tamir** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that certain delegations in their statements had deliberately accused his country of all the evils inflicted on their children. In response, he maintained that using children as a tool for political gain and to create favourable public relations was unforgivable. The practice of brainwashing children, and teaching them to blow themselves up along with innocent bystanders, then blaming their actions on "root causes" must be repudiated in the strongest possible terms. Blame should be placed squarely on those who prepared them for such acts: the Palestinian Authority and its groups. Delegations which blamed "root causes" were encouraging suicide bombings, a practice which must be eradicated. Israeli children too were being systematically targeted on a daily basis. If the world community ignored those killings and condoned that practice in the Middle East, nothing could prevent it from spreading to other regions.

Agenda item 102: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/57/452)

75. **Mr. Arias** (Spain), Chairman of the Working Group established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/125, introduced the Group's report (A/57/330 and Add.1). One of the conclusions reached by the Group, after rigorous and detailed examination of the situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), was that the Institute's ability to act would be considerably enhanced if it received greater attention from the Secretariat. Its fundamental problems had been a lack of leadership and a lack of coordination with other United Nations bodies, especially since the closing of its New York office.

76. The discussions in the Working Group had made it clear that INSTRAW had an important and vital mandate for gender training and research, that many Member States were willing to make efforts to maintain it, and that the Institute's economic and administrative deficiencies had been aggravated by poor coordination.

77. The Working Group had come to the unanimous conclusion that the Institute, the only United Nations institute with a mandate to conduct gender training and research and the only United Nations institute in Ibero-America, must be maintained. The financing proposals accompanying the Working Group's report were an attempt to place INSTRAW on the same footing as other United Nations institutes.

78. **Mr. Padilla** (Dominican Republic) said that, in the view of his delegation, the Working Group had fulfilled its mandate to conduct a thorough, exhaustive and objective evaluation of the work of INSTRAW. The Working Group had studied in detail all the information and documentation available on the Institute, but unfortunately, despite repeated requests, the Secretariat had not included that documentation in the report. The Group had also held a comprehensive exchange of views with representatives of a number of relevant Secretariat departments and United Nations agencies. The Group had concluded that the Institute had a valuable and substantive contribution to make to the advancement of women within the United Nations system, provided that it was properly restructured and revitalized and was given the financial and human resources it needed to fulfil its mandate.

79. The Secretary-General had submitted a note on the subject (A/57/129-E/2002/77) to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2002, rather than the report that had been requested in General Assembly resolution 56/125. The note of the Secretary-General currently before the Committee (A/57/452) did not provide any new information, nor did it address the substantive aspects of restructuring the Institute to enable it to overcome its financial difficulties.

80. The Working Group's report was a report submitted to the General Assembly and it was thus for the Member States to decide the future of INSTRAW.

81. **Ms. Kislinger** (Venezuela) said that her delegation appreciated receiving the views of the Secretary-General, but reiterated that it was for the Member States to decide on the restructuring of the Institute. The Secretariat's interpretation of the Working Group's recommendations should be only one element in that decision. Referring to document A/57/542, paragraph 8, she requested clarification of the source of the mandate for the reorientation of the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS).

82. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin) said that her delegation welcomed most of the recommendations contained in the note of the Secretary-General on the situation of

INSTRAW. As a unique and specific body, it was essential that the Institute should remain autonomous. Her delegation was strongly in favour of appointing a new Director and also supported the establishment of a post of Deputy Director. The allocation of $500,000 for INSTRAW from the regular budget should encourage donors to make additional contributions. Her delegation also welcomed the suggestion that Member States should participate in the Board of Trustees, which would enhance transparency in its management.

83. Turning to the advancement of women in her own country, Benin was a patriarchal society, governed by customary law, in which a woman's status was determined by that of her family and her husband and by her professional activities. The democratization of political structures had permitted the emergence of a women's movement, however, and a few women had managed to gain access to positions of responsibility, although only in decision-making on productive resources and politics.

84. The advancement of women in Benin was limited by traditional cultural practices, the burden of housework and the high drop-out rate among girls. Many development and awareness-raising projects were under way, but it was difficult to effect lasting change without ongoing efforts. Women's associations and civil society had pushed for the adoption of the Code of Persons and the Family in June 2002, a landmark instrument which was basically compatible with the objectives of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Code was not perfect and women's associations would be bringing articles they considered discriminatory before the Constitutional Court, but it paved the way for improving women's lives.

85. Ultimately, women would be their own liberators. Therefore, while teaching women to empower themselves, emphasis must also be placed on educating girls. Her Government was committed to keeping girls in school so that they could take charge of their own futures and help reduce the poverty that impeded women's empowerment.

86. The annual debate on the advancement of women showed that little had changed, but she hoped that, with the ongoing assistance of development partners, it would be possible to accelerate the advancement of women in her country.

87. **Ms. Ramirez** (Costa Rica) said that her delegation attached great importance to the survival of INSTRAW, as one of only three United Nations agencies based in a developing country, and welcomed the report of the Working Group.

88. **Ms. Ayuso** (Argentina) said that her delegation had been surprised to learn of the issuance of a note of the Secretary-General on the situation of INSTRAW. In order to avoid budgetary implications estimated at $1 million, it had been decided that the Working Group established under General Assembly resolution 56/125 would not receive support from the Secretariat. It was surprising therefore that the Secretary-General should have submitted an evaluation of the Working Group's recommendations, when the Secretariat had not participated in the Group's work.

89. Her delegation believed that the Working Group's recommendations offered a realistic solution to the crisis of INSTRAW. When it came to consider the costs involved in maintaining the Institute, the General Assembly must bear in mind that INSTRAW was the only United Nations body with a mandate to study gender issues. Civil society would find it difficult to understand that the United Nations was discontinuing quality gender research simply for budgetary reasons. She therefore urged Member States to endorse the Working Group's recommendations and the Secretariat to execute their instructions efficiently.

90. **Mr. Amoros Nuñez** (Cuba) commended the Government of the Dominican Republic for its efforts on behalf of INSTRAW and endorsed the recommendations of the Working Group.

91. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women), replying to the representative of Venezuela, said that GAINS required specialized expertise and resources.

92. **Ms. Butchey** (Interim Director, INSTRAW) said that, at the time of the audit of the Institute and its consideration by the Working Group, GAINS had been in its initial stages. Phases 1 and 2 had now been completed, and what was needed was not so much reorientation as enhancement of its technical resources and expertise in order to move on to subsequent phases.

93. **Ms. Kislinger** (Venezuela) said that it was for Member States to decide on the future of GAINS, which required a thorough discussion.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.